



# Borough of Telford and Wrekin

## CABINET

Thursday 13 October 2022

### Independent Inquiry Update Report

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|---------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>          | Cllr Lee Carter – Cabinet Lead: Independent Inquiry |  |
| <b>Lead Director:</b>           | Anthea Lowe - Director: Policy & Governance         |  |
| <b>Service Area:</b>            | Policy & Governance                                 |  |
| <b>Report Author:</b>           | Anthea Lowe – Director: Policy & Governance         |  |
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| <b>Wards Affected:</b>          | All Wards   |  |
| <b>Key Decision:</b>            | Not Key Decision                                    |  |
| <b>Forward Plan:</b>            | Not Applicable                                      |  |
| <b>Report considered by:</b>    | N/A   |  |

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#### 1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- 1.1 Notes the update contained within this report in respect of the steps taken following publication of the Independent Inquiry into CSE in Telford to ensure recommendations are implemented;
- 1.2 Notes and endorses the governance model for implementing the recommendations as set out in **Appendix A** to this report;
- 1.3 Delegates authority to the Director: Policy & Governance to take all steps necessary to engage an independent Chair and independent facilitator for the Strategic Implementation Group as identified within this report; and
- 1.4 Delegates authority to the Director: Policy & Governance to take all steps necessary to engage an independent Chair for the CSE Partners Group as identified within this report.

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 This report is intended to provide an update to Members in respect of the steps that have been taken to support the implementation of recommendations following the publication of the report of the Independent Inquiry into CSE in Telford (“the Inquiry”) on 12 July 2022.

## **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 In 2018, it was agreed that the Council would commission a judge-led independent inquiry into historic child sexual exploitation (“CSE”) within the Borough and, further to this agreement, the Council engaged international law firm Eversheds Sutherland in January 2019 to act as Commissioning Body to appoint an independent Chair. The Independent Chair, Tom Crowther KC, was appointed in July 2019 and his work commenced shortly thereafter.
- 3.2 On 12 July 2022, Tom Crowther published his report (“the Report”) which contained 47 recommendations. Since then, a significant amount of work has been carried out to ensure that the Council, and partner agencies, have appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure that the recommendations are implemented. This report summarises the action taken to date.
- 3.3 On 14 July 2022, the Leader confirmed that the Council would be working with individuals with lived experience of CSE (often referred to as survivors). These three individuals, referred to in this report as Independent Lived Experience Consultees, have broad experience of working within the field of CSE and trafficking; being recognised on the national stage in respect of the work they do with survivors, delivering training across a range of statutory organisations, advising the Home Office on matters relating to trafficking and supporting NGOs in their efforts to combat CSE and trafficking.
- 3.4 Members will know that child safeguarding is the joint responsibility of a number of organisations and that there is a statutory requirement for these organisations to form a Safeguarding Partnership. The Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership covers both adults’ and children’s safeguarding with the Safeguarding Children’s Board being responsible for matters relating to children and young people. The Safeguarding Children’s Board, and the wider Safeguarding Partnership, is chaired by an independent Chair.

### **Action taken since publication**

- 3.5 An action plan has been created which breaks down each of the 47 recommendations into individual actions; 149 in total. This action plan identifies the lead agency, lead officers within the Council, sets out what outcome each recommendation is expected to deliver and what evidence is needed to demonstrate that the recommendation has been implemented. This is a working document and will be updated regularly to reflect the changing landscape of implementation as matters progress. It should be noted that the actions encompass those that are the responsibility of a single organisation and those that are cross-cutting across two or more agencies.

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3.6 Meetings with partners have taken place to agree a model of governance for the implementation of recommendations and to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place for approval across all organisations as well as the Safeguarding Partnership having overall oversight of the partnership response. Attached at **Appendix A** is a copy of the governance model, which is described in more detail below.

3.7 The governance model provides for a number of groups, each with an individual purpose. These are summarised below.

### 3.7.1 Internal Operations Group (IOG)

The IOG is an internal Council group. This group is chaired by a member of the Senior Management Team and comprises officers from across a number of services within the Council, from ICT to licensing, finance to children;s services. The purpose of this group is, amongst other things, to:-

- a) using, their service area expertise, suggest ways in which the recommendations can be implemented;
- b) receive actions from the Strategic Implementation Group (SIG); and
- c) ensure actions are implemented within their respective service areas.

Each organisation has similar internal arrangements to consider recommendations in respect of their own agencies.

### 3.7.2 Strategic Implementation Group (SIG)

The SIG is a group made up of a number of individuals internal to the Council and external partners. The independent lived experience consultees are part of this group. The purpose of this group is, amongst other things, to:-

- a) consider the action plan and agree the approach to implementation of recommendations;
- b) provide insight from those with lived experience in terms of the potential impacts of proposed actions;
- c) act as a forum for holding each other to account and holding partners to account; and
- d) providing reports to full Council at appropriate junctures to keep Members updated as to progress of implementation.

It has been agreed that the SIG will be chaired by an Independent Chair and that it will also be supported by an Independent Facilitator. Suggestions of individuals to fulfil these two roles have been received from the independent lived experience consultees and from the Local Government Association (LGA) throughout September and we are now in a position to move towards engaging people to fulfil these roles. It is proposed that this exercise will be undertaken jointly with independent lived experience consultees; Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director: Policy & Governance to take the necessary steps to secure individuals to fulfil these roles.

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The independent lives experience consultees from the Strategic Implementation Group have made a request to comment on this report. Their comment is below:-

*'We are able to draw from our own lived experience and understanding of the trauma and long-lasting impact of CSE and modern slavery. We are committed to doing everything that we can to ensure that any actions taken are survivor focussed, and that any child at risk of CSE is at the heart of the actions agreed.*

*We have experience of supporting organisations, including national government, and have provided direct input into legislation and policy decisions to ensure that measures taken are inclusive.*

*We are pleased to be involved and active in supporting the implementation of recommendations. Whilst we are in the early stages of that process, we believe that the Council is committed to implementing the recommendations and being subject to critical challenge from us (and others).*

*We are satisfied that the governance model that has been developed is one which will allow the Council and partners to effectively engage with each other and with us to ensure that all parties are working towards the aim of implementing all recommendations*

### 3.7.3 CSE Partners Operations Group

This group is intended to bring partners together and is the forum for representatives from the respective internal operational groups to come together and update on progress of implementation and discuss how those actions that are cross-cutting can be implemented. Again, it is intended that this group will be independently chaired and, we are now in a position to proceed towards engaging someone to fulfil this role. Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director: Policy & Governance to take the necessary steps to secure an individual to fulfil this role.

### 3.7.4 Cross-Party Member Liaison Group

It is proposed that, in order to introduce additional scrutiny to the process, a cross-party Member Group is formed to review progress against the action plan. To be effective, it is proposed that this group will be made up of one member from each political group. Group Leaders have received an invitation to nominate a member to this group.

### 3.7.5 Scrutiny Assembly

The implementation of recommendations is, clearly, a priority for the Council and there is a desire for the process to be as transparent as possible. As a result, it is intended that scrutiny assembly will be given an opportunity (roughly every 6 months) to review the action taken in respect of implementation. Members will know that scrutiny has an ability to invite partners to attend meetings to give an account of actions they have taken and it is proposed that representatives from partner organisations will be invited to attend scrutiny assembly meetings.

### 3.7.6 Full Council

It is proposed that a report will be presented to full Council approximately every 6 months so that there is further opportunity to review progress against implementation. It is expected that the SIG will prepare reports for consideration by full Council including a final report to confirm that actions have been implemented and recommending that Mr Crowther is invited to return to Telford and Wrekin to review implementation of recommendations. Currently, officers are tasked with working towards an implementation date of end of December 2023 which is 6 months' earlier than the Independent Inquiry suggested.

### 3.7.7 Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership

As mentioned earlier in this report, the Safeguarding Partnership is responsible for the partnership response to children's safeguarding. The Safeguarding Partnership has agreed the governance model outlined above and shown in **Appendix A**. It should be noted that this governance model includes a reporting line to the Safeguarding Partnership to ensure oversight and assurance using the existing governance structures within the Partnership.

#### **Progress against recommendations to date**

3.8 As well as the activity outlined above, some progress has already been made against some of the recommendations contained within the Report. These are summarised below.

#### 3.8.1 Recommendation 7 - Budget commitment to fund CATE

This recommendation requires the Council to make an ongoing funding commitment to the CATE (Children Abused Through Exploitation) team. At Cabinet on 14 July 2022, the Leader made a commitment to continue to fund CATE, in accordance with the recommendation, for as long as the administration is in place. This has now been picked up as part of the budget-planning process to ensure that this is taken into account through the budget-setting process and included in the medium term financial strategy.

#### 3.8.2 Recommendation 17 – Counselling for victims/survivors

This recommendation requires the Council to commit to the provision of contingency funding for continued access to counselling for affected victims/survivors following the publication of the Report. This is something that the Council had already put in place in anticipation of the Report being published. Throughout the Inquiry process, counselling was made available through an independent, confidential counselling service, Base 25 to support those who wanted to give evidence to the Inquiry. Arrangements have been made with Base 25 to continue to provide counselling to those who are affected by the publication of the report.

### 3.8.3 Recommendation 10 – Review of CATE Pathway

This recommendation comprises a number of actions, the first being an initial review of the CATE pathway to ensure that it fully articulates the model of response provided including the circumstances in which a child that is the subject of a Child Protection Plan can receive support via the CATE Pathway, and vice versa. That initial review has been carried out and the CATE pathway document has been updated to accurately reflect how the service is delivered and, in particular, to reflect that the CATE Pathway and statutory safeguarding pathways are not mutually exclusive. The remaining actions will be completed as part of the work required for the action plan.

### 3.8.4 Recommendation 23 – Working with neighbouring licensing authorities

In essence, this recommendation recognised the good practice of the licensing team in respect of steps taken to tackle CSE and requires the Council to work with neighbouring authorities to seek agreement to taking an identical approach to things such as CSE training for taxi and hackney carriage drivers, taxi standards and pricing structures. Letters have been sent to Leaders and Chief Executives of our three neighbouring authorities seeking a meeting to progress discussions on these points.

### 3.8.5 Recommendation 28 – Explore implementation of CCTV in taxis

The Council had already started work on a pilot scheme to encourage installation of CCTVs in taxis, having recently updated its policy on CCTV usage in taxis. The first CCTV system has recently been installed in a hackney carriage vehicle which operates regularly from outside Pussycats Nighclub in Wellington. The licensing team is continuing to engage with drivers and operators to increase take up of CCTV installation as part of the pilot. The outcome of the pilot scheme will help to influence next steps and inform the consultation with the trade as set out in the recommendation.

### 3.8.6 Recommendation 19 – Youth Support

This recommendation requires the Council to collaborate with external organisations who may be able to offer youth services. Work has started on this recommendation by mapping out exactly what provision exists within the Borough from all organisations, such as the Council, community groups and the voluntary sector. This will then help to inform discussions around any gaps in the youth offer and how these can be addressed.

## 4.0 **Alternative Options**

- 4.1 It is open to the Council not to implement any or all of the recommendations. However, if this approach was adopted, there would be missed opportunities on the part of the Council, and partners, to review and improve safeguarding

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practices within the Borough. Additionally, the administration has made a commitment to ensuring all recommendations are implemented.

### **5.0 Key Risks**

- 5.1 There is a risk associated with this report in so much as the implementation of some of the recommendations require budget commitment. At a time of economic turbulence, there is a risk that the actions needed to implement recommendations are not sustainable in the long term; this applies to all partners. However, as part of the ongoing financial management measures for each organisation, there will be a need to review priorities and make decisions in accordance with the economic circumstances at the time. The Council has made it clear that it is committed to implementing all recommendations relating to it and this will be taken into account through the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 5.2 There is a risk that the progress against actions will not progress in as timely a manner as desired. For this reason, the Council is working towards an earlier implementation date than expected by the Inquiry. Whilst the intention is to deliver all recommendations by the end of December 2023, there is flexibility within the implementation programme to adapt in the event of any unforeseen circumstances.

### **6.0 Council Priorities**

- 6.1 This report supports the following council priorities:-
- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their community.
  - All neighbourhoods are a great place to live.

### **7.0 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 A number of recommendations made in the Report will have cost implications which will need to be considered as part of the Council's medium term financial strategy.

### **8.0 Legal and HR Implications**

- 8.1 The Council has the legal power to secure services from a wide range of organisations and individuals to enable it to carry out its functions. The proposals contained in this report are in line with these legal powers.
- 8.2 Ultimately, it will be a matter for the independent Chair of the Independent Inquiry to reach a conclusion as to the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the implementation process. Whilst there are no legislative provisions setting out how best to manage projects of this nature, the robust governance structure described in this report will support the Council, and partners, in demonstrating that appropriate actions have been completed.

## **9.0 Ward Implications**

- 9.1 Although there are no direct ward implications arising from the proposals contained in this report, it is clear that the ongoing implementation of recommendations will impact upon those living in all wards within the Borough.

## **10.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications**

- 10.1 There is significant evidence demonstrating that children and young people who experience CSE suffer significant and long-lasting trauma throughout their lives. Evidence suggests that many (although not all) who experience CSE are more likely to have less positive life outcomes than those who have not; this includes lower educational attainment, difficulty building and maintaining secure relationships, difficulty securing employment, mental health challenges and substance abuse.
- 10.2 The proposals set out in this report are the first step in strengthening the response offered to tackle CSE across the Borough by all agencies with safeguarding duties.

## **11.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 11.1 The implementation of recommendations will include consideration of equality and diversity matters as actions are progressed.

## **12.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 12.1 There are environmental impacts associated with holding meetings in person as a result of carbon emissions. However, where appropriate, meetings will be held remotely or as a hybrid meeting.
- 12.2 Wherever possible, papers relating to meetings will be shared electronically only.

## **13.0 Background Papers**

- 13.1 N/A

## **14.0 Appendices**

- 14.1 Appendix A – Governance Model.

## **15.0 Report Sign Off**

| <b>Signed off by</b> | <b>Date sent</b> | <b>Date signed off</b> | <b>Initials</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Legal                | 11/10/2022       | 11/10/2022             | RP              |
| Finance              | 11/10/2022       | 11/10/2022             | MB              |